

THE GAY HISTORY SERIES – Lesson #8

The Killer Catamite Andrew Cunanan (1997)

Andrew Phillip Cunanan (August 31, 1969 – July 23, 1997) was a homosexual spree killer who went off the rails and murdered at least five people, including fashion designer Gianni Versace, during a three month period in 1997, ending with his own suicide, at age 27.

Cunanan was a mulatto, born in National City, California, to Modesto Cunanan, a Filipino-American, and Mary Anne Shilacci, an Italian-American. At school, Cunanan was remembered as being bright and very talkative, testing with an IQ of 147. As a teenager, he developed a reputation as a prolific liar given to telling fantastic tales about his family and personal life. He was also adept at changing his appearance according to what he felt was most attractive at a given moment.

After graduating from high school in 1987, he enrolled at the University of California, San Diego, where he majored in American history. After graduating from UCSD, he settled in the notorious Castro District of San Francisco. While there, he frequented high class *gay* bars and prostituted himself to wealthy older men. (Four years of college resulting in a useless degree obviously fitted him for such a job).

When Cunanan was 19, his father deserted his family to avoid arrest for embezzlement. That same year, his mother learned of Cunanan's homosexuality. During an ensuing argument, he threw her against a wall, dislocating her shoulder. Before the murders, Cunanan was involved in petty theft and drug dealing.

The first known murder was that of one of his sodomites, Jeffrey Trail, a former US naval officer and propane salesman, on April 25, 1997, at Minneapolis. The next victim was a former john, architect David Madson, who was found on the east shore of Rush Lake near Rush City, Minnesota, on April 29, 1997, with gunshot wounds to the head. Police recognised a connection, as Trail's body had been found in Madson's Minneapolis loft apartment.

Next, Cunanan drove to Chicago and killed another one of his “clients,” 72-year-old Lee Miglin, a prominent real estate developer, on May 4, 1997. Following this murder, the FBI added him to its Ten Most Wanted list.

Five days later, Cunanan, who took Miglin's car, found his fourth victim in Pennsville, New Jersey, at the Finn's Point National Cemetery, killing 45 year old caretaker William Reese. In this case he seems to have killed Reese not because of any former sexual liaison, but in order to steal his truck. While the manhunt focused on Reese's truck, Cunanan “hid in plain sight” at Miami Beach, Florida, for two months between his fourth and fifth murders. He even used his own name to pawn a stolen item, knowing that police routinely check pawn shop records for stolen merchandise. Some people believe this indicates Cunanan was self-destructive and wanted to get caught. Or he may have just been stupid.

On July 15, 1997, Cunanan murdered fashion designer Gianni Versace. There has been an immense amount of waffle and sand throwing in the liberal media as to whether or not Versace had any former relationship with Cunanan. Versace was known to be *gay* (*molto tutti frutti* in Italian) and known to employ “high class” rent boys; it seems odd that Cunanan would simply pick a victim at random, and it just happens to be a celebrity. Apparently, he stalked Versace, waited outside his Miami Beach home, and gunned him down as he opened the wrought iron gate. A witness attempted to pursue Cunanan, but couldn't catch him.

The vehicle he used, as well as the clothes he had just been wearing, an alternative passport, and newspaper clippings of his murders, was found in a nearby garage by the police who responded. (So why didn't he use the passport? And where did he get such a thing? Contrary to popular urban legend, you can't just buy a false passport on a street corner for \$200. There always seemed to be something moving in the shade with this case).

On July 23, 1997, eight days after murdering Versace, Cunanan allegedly shot himself in the mouth in the upstairs bedroom of a Miami houseboat. Well, anyway, he was found dead with a bullet in his brain, put it that way. He used the same gun he used to commit the other murders, a Taurus PT100 semi-automatic pistol in .40 S&W calibre, which had been stolen from his first victim, Jeff Trail.

At the time of the crimes, there was much public and press speculation that Cunanan's motives were tied to a diagnosis of HIV infection; however, an autopsy found him to be HIV negative. In order to piece together a motive for his killing spree, police searched the boathouse where Cunanan died. However, Cunanan left behind few personal belongings, surprising investigators, given his reputation for acquiring money and expensive possessions from wealthy older men. Police considered few of the findings to be of note, except multiple tubes of hydrocortisone cream and a fairly extensive collection of the fiction of C.S. Lewis, which is very odd reading for a *gay* homicidal maniac, since Lewis was a proponent and defender of fundamentalist Christianity.

“His motivations remain a mystery,” as we are told. Various theories include jealousy for Versace's role as a “gay icon”, as well as necessity and opportunity in some of the other murders. Examination of his behavior from reports also indicates that he may have suffered from psychopathy. (Ya think?)